

## NOTABLE LETTERS SIGNED BY FOREMOST AMERICANS

## Historic Sidelights in Letters from Washington, Jackson, Lincoln and Other Men in Notable Group.

BETWEEN the discriminating autograph collector and the "autograph fiend" there is a wide difference. The latter has been anathematized by Robert Louis Stevenson and by many others. An autograph collector, to use the definition of a well known writer on the subject, is one "who accumulates for the benefit of posterity either important documents or the letters of famous men." The "autograph hunter," who persistently pesters noted personages for their signatures in albums or on photographs, has nothing in common with the scientific collector of holograph letters.

Scattered throughout the country are many private collections of autographs of great literary and historical value, whose existence is known to few besides the friends of their modest owners. Though not large, the number of such collections has been rapidly growing, as the diversion and refreshment for both mind and body to be had in gathering these treasures has become known to an increasing number of people. Then, too, as Andrew Lang remarked, "It may well be that, in the long run, the collector and his family do not lose money. The amusement may chance to be a very fair investment." When discretion has been exercised in their purchase there are few things that can compare with high class autographs as an investment.

A comparatively "unknown" collection of autographs is the property of Mr. Joseph A. McAlleenan, of New York City. Besides one of the few complete sets of the autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence this collection includes letters of all the Presidents of the United States, from Washington to Wilson; numerous letters of Revolutionary generals, many of them of great rarity and importance, and many other unique literary and historical documents. This interesting collection is for the most part unpublished.

LETTER THAT PROVES THAT WASHINGTON WAS A DISTILLER.

It may come as a shock to some to learn that the "Father of his Country" was engaged in the liquor trade, but from his letter to his nephew, Colonel William Augustine Washington, relating to the operation of his distillery and the sale of whiskey, it appears that this was the case. This interesting letter, a fine example of Washington's beautiful handwriting, reads as follows:

Mount Vernon, Oct. 29th, 1799.  
My dear Sir: Your letter of the 8th instant has been duly received, and this letter will be handed to you by Mr. Lewis, to whom I have sent my Bill & Distillery, and who comes into your parts to see if he can procure (on reasonable terms) grain with which to keep them employed. Your advice and aid in enabling him to obtain these goods will be serviceable to him, & oblige me. — Mr. Lewis is a cautious man, and I persuade myself will scrupulously fulfill any

it suits your convenience, letting me know, in the meantime, the quantity I may rely on, that my purchase of this grain may be regulated thereby.

Mrs. Washington has got tolerably well again, and unites with me in every good wish for you and yours. With very great esteem and friendship I remain

Your affectionate uncle,  
Go. WASHINGTON.

Col. Wm. A. Washington.

Washington died on December 14, 1799, just six weeks after the date of this letter, and Jefferson wrote, "Verily a great man has fallen in Israel." Mrs. Washington survived her husband two years, dying in 1801.

SHOWS THAT GENERAL CHARLES LEE AFFRONTED MRS. WASHINGTON.

Appropos of Mrs. Washington, a curious bit of gossip is revealed in a letter of General Nathaniel Greene, dated from Trenton, N. J., December 17, 1778, and addressed to the American general, William Alexander Lord Stirling. The letter, which deals at length with conditions in the commissary department of the army, concludes with this interesting paragraph:

General Lee and Col. Laurens had a duel in which the former was wounded in the back. The cause of the duel I have not learnt, but it has been said General Lee affronted Mrs. Washington at the Assembly before His Excellency's arrival in town; but whether it is true or not I cannot tell.

The "Col. Laurens" referred to was Colonel John Laurens, the "Bayard of the Revolution," aid and secretary to General Washington, and his chief means of communication with the foreigners in the American service. At the battle of Monmouth Laurens is said to have saved the life of the commander in chief by his intrepidity. It was at this battle that the treacherous conduct of General Charles Lee provoked a fierce outburst of wrath on the part of Washington. Lee was tried and found guilty of misbehavior before the enemy. His insolent and offensive remarks regarding Washington, on learning of the decision of the court martial, caused Laurens to challenge and fight him a duel, in which Lee was wounded in the arm. It is not unlikely that Lee, who had a venomous and ungovernable tongue, referred to Mrs. Washington in his remarks. Colonel Laurens was killed in battle in the Carolinas while serving under General Greene.

To the devil with  
autograph-hunters

Yours truly  
Robert Louis Stevenson  
Helen  
Samson

Executive Mansion  
May 31, 1862

Hon. Senator Simmons  
My dear Sir:

This distressed girl says she belongs to you state; that she was her father's and brother's in our army, till they went with it to the peninsula; that her father was killed there, & her father was pursuing and that she is here, wanting employment to support herself. If you can be satisfied that her story is correct, please see if you can not get Mr. Sec. Shaw or friend Norton to find her a place. Yours truly, A. Lincoln.

By the papers I see General Arnold is spreading death and desolation among you. How long is this curse upon the human race to go unpunished? Certainly vengeance will overtake him shortly; and oh! that it may happen in a way that his country may be revenged upon him! But enough of the wretch for the present.

I congratulate you upon your happy prospects in Virginia. Our hopes and expectations are all alive here. Fortune must be very ill-natured to give the Modern Hannibal an opportunity to escape; if he fails, as there is little doubt of, the pride of Britain will tumble in the dust.

What a triumph to America! What a crown of laurels to General Washington!

I shall say nothing of our operations here as my public dispatches give as good an account as anything I can say. I shall only observe that whatever is our success and glory in Virginia they are indebted to maneuvers here for laying the foundation for them.

The capture of Fort Mifflin by Ethan Allen and his "Green Mountain Boys" "in the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress," was one of the most stirring and dramatic incidents of the War of Independence. Allen's autograph is one of the rarest of Revolutionary names. The following letter, re-



My dear Sir,

Mount Vernon Oct 29, 1799.

Your letter of the 8th instant has been duly received, and this letter will be handed to you by Mr. Lewis, to whom I have sent my Bill & Distillery, and who comes into your parts to see if he can procure (on reasonable terms) grain with which to keep them employed. Your advice and aid in enabling him to obtain these goods will be serviceable to him, & oblige me. — Mr. Lewis is a cautious man, and I persuade myself will scrupulously fulfill any contracts he may enter into. — You will be perfectly safe, I conceive, in declaring this. Two hundred gallons of Whiskey will be ready this day for your sale, and the sooner it is taken the better, as the demand for this article (in these parts) is brisk. — The Rye may be sent when it suits your convenience. Letting me know, in the meantime, the quantity, may rely on, that my purchase of this grain may be regulated thereby.

Mrs. Washington has got tolerably well again, and unites with me in every good wish for you and yours. — With very great esteem and friendship I remain

Your affectionate uncle,

G. Washington

Col. Wm. A. Washington



Another letter of Greene is interesting from its reference to the traitor, Benedict Arnold, and the havoc wrought in Virginia by a British army under his command.

Referring to the capture of the fort, is one of the most curious and valuable documents in the McAlleenan collection. The spelling is Allen's.

To The Honorable Jonathan Trumbull, Esq., Capt. General, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Connecticut.

Honorable Sir: The Hazard of Taking Ticonderoga was supposed to be such that the Committee of War for the Expedition employed Mr. Jonas Fay of Bennington to Proceed with the Scout to said Premises in Character of Doctor & Surgeon, which Character Mr. Fay has merited by Ten Years of Successful Practice and as there appears still a greater Prospect of Need of a Person skilled in these Sciences and as Doctor Fay has with him on the Premises Considerable of a Quantity of Medicines, &c., and is willing and well skilled to Continue the Campaign in the said Capacity, I would therefore Recommend him to be Continued by Your Honour's Appointment and Ratification thereof thro the Campaign in the Capacity aforesaid.

This Recommendation and Request is made on the Hypothesis that Government will send a Military force to maintain the Sovereignty of Lake Champlain in favour of the Colonies.

From Your Honour's Most Obedient Humble Servant,  
This is the Largest Piece of Paper which at Present I have.  
ETHAN ALLEN.

I have.

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